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## Principal's Newsletter

1 March 2019

Dear Parents,

The [Prep ski trip](#) was by all accounts a great success. Great skiing, no breaks, perfect behaviour. These endless coach journeys are a tribute to an unflagging staff - special thanks in this case to Miss Clark, Mr Bishop and Mrs Doran.

Our apologies regarding the calendar function of our app. In an interconnected world, a squirrel in one application affects another, and we apparently have an entire team of Google engineers and other computer boffins trying to discover why the connectivity between calendar functions inexplicably became incomplete. For calendar events therefore check the website. The messaging and news sections of the app are still in rude health. The app company believe that the problem should be fixed over the weekend. When we have confirmed that the problem is fixed, we will send you an app message.

Our mood was substantially raised as we recommenced the term when John the Lollipop Man strode out into the maelstrom of traffic once again to resume his duties. His many fans and friends paid him a visit, some describing his return as the re-emergence of a grandfather in their life.

Our special thanks go to Mary who deputized brilliantly for John during his convalescence.

During our INSET day on Monday, teaching and support staff across the College gathered to hear from Mr Chris Straker about restorative thinking. Mr Straker, an experienced teacher and headteacher, took us through the pedigree of the ideas behind restorative practice in schools. His ideas resonated with many, as he explained the ways in which schools can improve pupil behaviour through restorative practices and through shrewd application of research. We were all particularly enthused that his ideas were based on the principle of relationships in school, and how those relationships can be repaired when they are broken without ever tolerating or accepting any behaviours that are not in keeping with the ethos and vision of the school. We particularly liked the way Mr Straker was able to reveal the fundamental category error which all schools engage in. When a child fails academically we tend to want to intervene and help the pupil overcome their learning difficulty. However, too often in schools, poor behaviour is viewed not as error which can be corrected but as a symptom of character. The ideas about how we can use these principles to further improve

the way we teach good behaviour have been flowing around the campus this week. Mr Straker has already engaged with a number of our parents and will be engaging with pupils also, and at our next Parent Information Evening we will have an update for you about how we intend to put the principles of restorative thinking into practice here.

One idea is to use peer mentoring and peer support better, perhaps using structures like the house system. We can see the enormous enthusiasm pupils have for this sort of volunteer role in the Artsmark Ambassador programme where sixth formers help teach younger pupils in the College. We also see it in accelerated reading and paired reading programmes. Young people, who were described in a report this week, as more depressed and alienated than ever, actually want to contribute positively and rather formally to the teaching that happens in the school. We need to keep finding ways to advance this strategy throughout the College because it improves our community and culture of learning even further.

The Sixth Form taster lessons were a sun-dappled success with more than 100 external candidates coming to try out a lesson in the subjects they are interested in. We have had more than 300 external applications for our sixth form and it would be a problem of impossible complexity if all these applicants received the required grades and chose to come to our school. Our new Godwyn House, soon to be equipped with a functioning dining room would not be able to contain such a number.

The Spanish orals are the harbinger of the onrushing train of the GCSEs examinations, now closer than they appear. It is hugely encouraging to see so many pupils take advantage of the ReviseTil5 programme led by Mr Griffith and to see the determination and focus everywhere from the library to private study carrel. There are now so many quiet places to study that there can be no excuse for not taking advantage of these oases of concentration.

The next phase of campus development work is the redecoration of the rooms abandoned when the Sixth Form moved into Godwyn House. This includes classroom redecoration and new carpets, as well as, at last, a chaplaincy centre and prayer room upstairs in Gladstone. In the medium term we are looking to further gardens and fences around the primary phase, refurbish Beechlands into a boarding facility, and build four Prep School classrooms. But more on that later.

Jan M and Lehtu M argued their way to Cambridge last Saturday. The quality of debating in the College has rocketed since Mr Barnicoat and Ms Diamond began to offer the activity. In this latest competition, the International Competition for Young Debaters hosted by Cambridge University, our debaters took on 28 other independent and state schools' debating teams. We were second, and therefore get to send our team to the Cambridge Union, that practice ground for politicians, for the finals in April. Our young team of Amelia Y and Amelia R show amazing promise and also performed very well, and along with our recent successes at senior level show that we will be a force in these forensic duels for years to come.

This week, our GCSE and A Level artists celebrated [Global Scouse Day](#) with Liverpool artist Paul Curtis at the Palm House (where Year 11 entrepreneur Sean W (Brook's) was also selling his art work and illustrations), while our [Year 7 Wilton Scholars](#) have been busy solving crime! You can read more about these adventures in the news section on the school website.

Sport is back in swing. Yesterday the Y9s were at the Adams 7s tournament while we play netball against Calderstones and prepare for a Prep School rugby fixture on Saturday. Alice, the Play, is also heating up and is about to hatch its production on Thursday 14 March and Friday 15 March at 7pm in the MV Theatre. There is also a matinee performance on Thursday 14 March at 2pm. Tickets are available from Mrs Herron in the Prep School office from Monday.

Our recent week of rest already seems a lifetime ago.

May I wish you and yours a happy and restful weekend.

**Yours sincerely,**

**Mr H van Mourik Broekman**  
**Principal**